## The New Zimbabwe
## Zimbabwe's Mineral Potential

There are **17 rare earth elements, of which 11 have been found in Zimbabwe**. Recently, workers in Zimbabwe discovered vast deposits of rare-earth elements in Gungwa, Mutondongwe, and Nanuta in the Mashonaland Central province. When combined to form minerals, these elements are used in the creation of missile systems, electric vehicles, computer screens, fiber optics, medical images, and other essential technological devices.

China's Impact and the Threat to US

According to President Emmerson Mnangagwa, **Zimbabwe could hold the world's second-largest deposits of such minerals**, trailing only China. President Mnangagwa emphasized that although Zimbabwe has significant deposits of the elements and minerals, it needs the requisite technology, skills, and manpower from abroad to determine the vastness of its resources. While currently most of the minerals excavated from Zimbabwe leave the country unprocessed, the Zimbabwean government is attempting to increase its beneficiation capabilities to increase export value and demonstrate the country is conducive for investment. Thus, **there are significant opportunities for the U.S. government and U.S. businesses to provide the heavy machinery and transportation infrastructure necessary to successfully extract these minerals from the mines.**

Currently, China is the world's top producer of rare earth materials, **with the United States relying on it for almost 80 percent of its imports.** China's capacity to produce rare earth materials is five times the combined capacity of the rest of the world. Additionally, it accounts for 95 percent of the world's production of gallium, 82 percent of the world's production of tungsten, and 71 percent of the world's production of antimony.

**In June 2019, the Chinese National Development and Reform Commission signaled it would curb exports of rare earth metals during the trade war with the United States. The previous month, China's rare earth exports decreased 16 percent from April and 18 percent from the year before.**

While the Commerce Department has recommended that the United States take immediate action to increase domestic rare earth production, currently there is only one operational rare earths facility in the United States – the Mountain Pass mine in California.

Rare earth elements essential for U.S. defense capabilities include samarium, neodymium, and lanthanum. Samarium is used to make permanent magnets, precision-guided weapons, and "white noise" production in stealth technology. Neodymium is used for laser ranger-finders, guidance systems, and military communications, while lanthanum is used in the production of night-vision goggles.

Currently, China is the dominant producer of all three elements. In June 2019, President Trump invoked the Defense Production Act to counteract Chinese dominance in the market. The order called on the Defense Department to enhance the production of defense-grade magnets made of neodymium and samarium, noting that U.S. domestic output, "cannot reasonably be expected to provide the production capability." Furthermore, the Act direct the U.S. government to pursue contracts for such materials to spur domestic production.



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Zimbabwe is a potential source for such samarium and neodymium, as the Katete REE Project in the Matebeleland region is currently prospecting for samarium and other rare earth elements. Neodymium has also been discovered in the Gakara mine in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe also hosts deposits of lanthanum. Bank of America Merrill Lynch metals strategist Michael Widmer warned that Chinese trade restrictions on lanthanum could significantly impact U.S. industries, emphasizing its widespread use in creating high tech devices, glass, and defense materials.

Additional Mineral Wealth

In addition to rare earth elements, Zimbabwe also has a highly diversified mineral sector with approximately 40 different minerals and elements, including vast deposits of lithium. Last year, Minister of Mines Winston Chitando announced that Zimbabwe has enough **deposits to supply 20 percent of the world's lithium**. While it is currently Africa's top producer of lithium, Zimbabwe objective is to supply 10 percent of the world's lithium in the next four years.

**Zimbabwe also holds significant deposits of chromium, platinum, copper, and nickel.** The Great Dyke holds the **world's largest high-grade chromite deposits** as well as the **world's second largest deposit of platinum metals**, which include ruthenium, rhodium, palladium, osmium, iridium, and platinum. Last year, the Zimbabwe Defence Forces divested its shares in the Darwendale platinum project, which is now a joint investment owned by Russian investors and local Zimbabwean businesses. In February 2019, the African Export-Import Bank and the African Finance Corporation announced it would allocate $262 million to the project. Chinese mining companies Tsinghshan and Anjin Investments are also currently active in Zimbabwe.

**Rare Earth Elements Found in Zimbabwe Include:**

- Cerium (Ce)
- Dysprosium (Dy)
- Lanthanum (La)*
- Neodymium (Nd)*
- Samarium (Sm)*
- Thulium (Tm)
- Yttrium (Y)

*China-dominant material used in defense industry

**Other Valuable Resources in Zimbabwe Include:**

- Lithium **(20 percent of global supply)**
- Chromite **(World's Largest Deposits)**
- Platinum Metals **(World's Second Largest Deposits)**
- Gold
- Diamonds
- Tungsten
- Graphite

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